

FEBRUARY 2007

THE

WWW.REALTRUTH.ORG

REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



UNVEILING THE
NEW RUSSIA

THE
REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. V | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2007

A R T I C L E S

WWW.REALTRUTH.ORG



A Counterfeit “Jesus”?
Millions profess to “follow Jesus,” but are they all worshipping the Jesus described in the Bible?
Page 13

Unveiling the New Russia
From the rubble of the Soviet Union, a new Russia has arisen. Where is it headed?
Page 3

Seven Questions Your Minister Does NOT Want You to Ask!
Each Sunday, hundreds of millions assume they are being taught truths from the Bible—not knowing that basic understanding is being withheld from them.
Page 6

Society’s Spreading Cancer – The Twisted, Perverse and Bizarre (Part II)
Page 10

A Nuclear Middle East?
Is time running out for this volatile region?
Page 15

F E A T U R E S

Personal from David C. Pack 1
World News Desk 19

PHOTO CREDITS: All photographs courtesy of ArtToday, Inc., unless noted otherwise.

ABOUT OUR COVER: Russian President Vladimir Putin walks with U.S. President George W. Bush during a visit to the White House in 2005.
PHOTO: MCT

PUBLISHING: Published monthly (except March-April and September-October issues).

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DAVID C. PACK

SENIOR EDITORS

GEORGE C. ROGERS

JAMES F. TURCK

MANAGING EDITOR

BRUCE A. RITTER

WORLD NEWS DESK

MARK P. DENEEN

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK

JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

JEFFREY D. DAVIS

KEVIN D. DENEEN

MARK P. DENEEN

RYAN P. DENEEN

CHET R. ECHELBERGER

ROBERT R. FARRELL

CHARLES E. HERZOG

GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

JUSTIN T. PALM

BRUCE A. RITTER

GEORGE C. ROGERS

BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

JAMES F. TURCK

COPY EDITOR

JUSTIN T. PALM

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

VERNIA I. ANSTEY

JENNIFER L. DENEEN

ANGELA K. ECHELBERGER

DAVINA L. LISCHAK

GINGER M. SCHLEIFER

DEBORAH A. TUCKER

ART/GRAPHICS

BRUCE A. RITTER

JAMES T. BOYLE

DARNITRA D. MAIDEN

PAULA C. RONDEAU

INFORMATION SERVICES

BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

JEFFREY D. DAVIS

ANGELA K. ECHELBERGER

RICHARD H. HEYMANN

The REAL TRUTH magazine is provided free of charge. This is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of The Restored Church of God, and by the offerings and donations of co-workers and donors. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support the Work of God in preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations are gladly welcomed as co-workers. Contributions should be sent to the address below.

The preparation and production of this magazine involved the work of editors, proofreaders, graphic artists, illustrators, writers, researchers and those who support the Work of God.

Copyright © 2007, The Restored Church of God. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved.

The Restored Church of God is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photos.

Scriptures are quoted from the King James (or Authorized) Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Contact The REAL TRUTH:

P.O. Box 23295

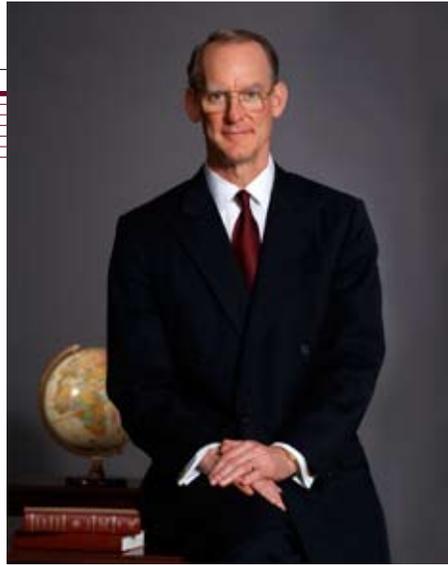
Wadsworth, OH 44282

www.realtruth.org

info@realtruth.org

PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Rearing Children in the Modern Age

A CONTROVERSIAL BILL was recently proposed to ban spanking in California. Penalties would range from mandatory parenting classes to heavy fines and jail time.

Elsewhere, just days after this bill was announced, a toddler and her parents made national news: They were kicked off an airplane because the child had a tantrum and would not stop kicking and screaming long enough to sit down for takeoff.

Is discipline necessary to correctly train a child? Or would children be better able to live productive, happy lives without it?

In many areas, society has gone from being overly strict to overly permissive. Where is the balance? The ultimate question is: How can parents produce happy, healthy children?

Lacking Knowledge

Modern bookstores in almost every city contain a wide variety of books teaching a host of men's ideas about how to rear children. While often containing interesting facts and quotes, and perhaps some few helpful minor points, none of these competing, disagreeing and largely confusing books, which are usually written as though they are trying to impress intellectuals, have succeeded in bringing the answers that the parents of today long for—and desperately need!

Millions of families today are in almost complete despair. Ignorance of the most basic *spiritual knowledge*

has brought about a near holocaust of a whole generation, now almost entirely lost to misguided thinking and false values. The terrible fruits of modern families are visible and obvious, but no one knows what to do about it. No one knows where to turn for the answers that countless millions of parents are seeking. The world has not known that there is an INSTRUCTION BOOK containing all the vital information necessary to rear children the right way.

More and more thinking people recognize that civilization is out of control. New problems of every kind are appearing, with older ones growing worse seemingly every day. The current generation of leaders has utterly failed in its responsibility to improve the world—to make it better for the next generation. GOVERNMENT LEADERS have failed to lead the world out of problems. BUSINESS LEADERS have not been able to stabilize the world's economy. GENERALS have failed to bring peace through military intervention. SCIENTISTS have failed to rid the world of food shortages, pollution and problems such as global warming. DOCTORS and MEDICAL SCIENCE have been unable to check the spread of deadly viruses and bacteria, and the diseases and other plagues that come from them. RELIGIOUS LEADERS and PHILOSOPHERS have utterly failed in bringing happiness, fulfillment and true purpose to the lives of billions.

All are looking to the next generation to bring final solutions to the world's greatest problems!

But, if the *present* picture looks bad, then the *future* looks much, much worse! The world's most important

resource—and the backbone of every society and nation on earth today—are its children. But today’s generation of young people is in big—HUGE—trouble. The condition of the present generation of youth is so bad, with problems so severe, that anyone with eyes to see does not, and could never, doubt this! But this is because parents have failed in their God-given responsibility to give their children the RIGHT FOUNDATION necessary to produce lives full of achievement, productivity and *true* success. They have not met the challenge! Again, no one has taught these parents—no one has equipped them for their responsibility.

Consider this from the perspective of how the world looks ahead to those it is counting on to produce the leaders they suppose—and anticipate—will be tomorrow’s “problem solvers”:

From today’s young people will come the university professors, schoolteachers and childcare professionals of tomorrow. They will also produce the scientists, inventors and explorers of the next age. And from today’s younger generation will also come the economists, financiers, business entrepreneurs and chief executive officers of the vast numbers of small businesses, companies and multinational corporations in tomorrow’s economy. The next generation of government leaders, senior military officers and members of futuristic “think tanks” will also come from those who are in school today. So will the philosophers, writers and journalists. And then there are the future doctors, psychologists and other professionals who will also arise from the modern generation. In addition, will come the lawyers, judges and law enforcement officials to deal with the worsening societal breakdown occurring today. Perhaps most important, the *religious leaders* of tomorrow will

come from the children of today, and it is desperately hoped that these will soon bring leadership that their predecessors have failed to bring for the last 6,000 years!

Of course, all of this first supposes that there will even *be* a tomorrow for the world, and that there will also *be* a generation to produce sufficiently qualified leaders to guide civilization closer to the final utopia that *every* generation and *all* nations have sought. The evidence is not good that either of these things will happen.

The nations of the world possess a vast sum of knowledge, and it increases every day, but they are ignorant of the right *kind* of knowledge—SPIRITUALLY REVEALED KNOWLEDGE. This is because the modern system of education is morally and spiritually bankrupt! Deluded educators have been biased against God and His Word by having had the atheistic teaching of evolution poured into them from childhood. They have taught young people for decades (and these have become today’s parents and grandparents) that there are “no absolutes” and that they must follow “situation ethics” in all circumstances. They have led the world into a kind of secular humanism—where people are driven by how they *feel* rather than clear definitions of *right* and *wrong*! But there *is* right and wrong in life—and the educators who are teaching the children of this world have cut themselves off from this knowledge (Isa. 59:1-2). They cannot teach what they were never taught. And neither can parents who have been indoctrinated in their thinking!

Also, this world’s churches have kept parents and young people steeped in traditional pagan philosophies and teachings that have deceived the world for millennia. All the world’s religions

have ignored the great spiritual principle of *cause* and *effect* that governs every aspect of life. They have all neglected to teach true *spiritual* values—that there is an inspired, vital INSTRUCTION BOOK from Almighty God that contains special knowledge. It explains that there is a great SPIRITUAL LAW that, when obeyed, brings all the good things that every human being seeks. Confused by the conflicting influence of blinded religious leaders and deceived educators, parents have utterly failed in their greatest responsibility, which should have been to teach their children how to live, and to instill in their young minds the marvelous truths of God’s Word and the SUPREME PURPOSE for which they were born! Again, they have failed to meet the challenge!

Facing the Challenge

It has been said that children represent a parent’s greatest stewardship. We could ask: What else even comes close?

Think of all that is at stake in how parents rear just one child. This little human being can either be armed with how to succeed in life, or literally *programmed* to fail—left *defenseless* against the many problems that life will throw at him! Further, the child’s children—the parents’ own grandchildren—will be directly affected by the principles of childrearing (good or bad), which could then in turn continue to be at least partially employed, potentially for generations to come. Then there is the effect the child will have on all the other people with whom he comes in contact throughout the balance of his life. And what about the very real peace and happiness—or lack thereof!—that the child brings to his parents as another direct result of how well they did their job? All these things are measured in very real

Please see PERSONAL, page 21



UNVEILING THE NEW RUSSIA

FROM THE RUBBLE OF THE SOVIET UNION, A NEW
RUSSIA HAS ARISEN. WHERE IS IT HEADED?

BY MARK P. DENEÉ

FOR DECADES, most of the world was affected by the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Regions were divided as each superpower attempted to exert influence and control.

For almost every conflict—whether economic or strategic—the U.S. would support one side and the USSR the other, such as Iran versus Iraq, India versus Pakistan; the Warsaw Pact countering the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was a time of spy planes, secret military bases located deep within mountains, nuclear bunkers, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly called “Star Wars.”

Beginning in the late 1980s, following Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms of the economy and public access to information, the USSR began to undergo significant political change. Following the August coup in 1991, several communist states declared

independence. That December, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Belavezha Accords, which dissolved the Soviet Union. Within weeks, it was confirmed: the Soviet Union had ceased to exist.

For some, it was a time of rejoicing—the Cold War was finally over, the Soviet Union was dead. Some even declared the U.S. the winner. At that time, and to a large degree ever since, the United States has been the world’s only superpower.

The new Russia went through a period of economic woes, increased crime and social unrest. It even began to receive financial aid from the U.S., the International Monetary Fund and other Western countries.

Another concern was the old Soviet nuclear arsenal. By the late 1990s, the U.S. was spending over \$1 billion a year to help Russia dismantle its weapons of mass destruction.

By the beginning of the 21st century, a new Russia had emerged: no longer communist, but quasi-democratic, with a new president, Vladimir Putin; missing some of the strategic assets it once controlled, but suddenly find-

ing itself at the helm of major energy resources and revenues; no longer an enemy of the West, yet not quite an ally. More recently, it has become a nation that is again showing signs of confidence, strength and power.

Rapid Change

Optimism existed in the late 1990s and even into 2000 that economic and social reforms would continue—Russia would remain on its presumed-ly slow but steady course toward Western capitalism.

Russia’s response to the 9/11 attack on America was similar to most other nations: sympathetic and supportive. Moscow even surprised some by offering the U.S. military access to former Soviet bases in Central Asia in the war in Afghanistan.

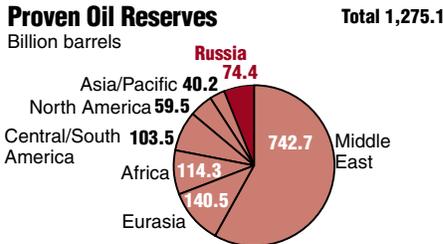
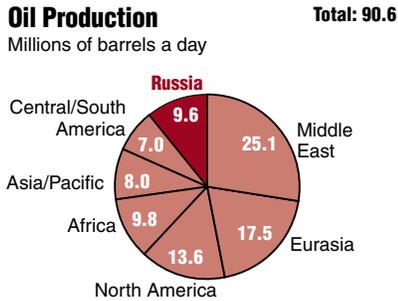
Some believed that, in return, Moscow expected Washington to “look the other way” regarding the conflict and apparent abuses in Chechnya. At the time a friendly relationship was established between Mr. Putin and U.S. President George W. Bush.

U.S.-Russian relations changed, however, as the U.S.-led “War on Terror” spread from Afghanistan to Iraq. As the case for war in Iraq was

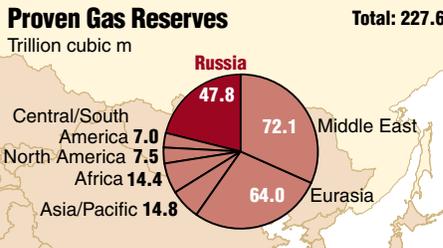
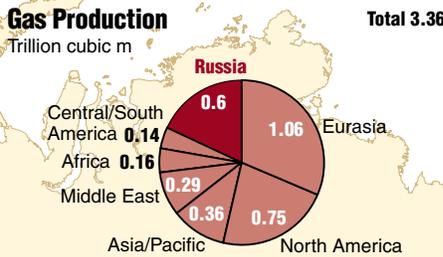


RUSSIAN ENERGY

Energy has become a hot topic between Russia and its European neighbors.



Key Energy Clients In Europe



being presented to the American public during the latter half of 2002 and the first months of 2003, Russia, along with most of the major European countries, maintained that an invasion of Iraq should be sanctioned only with permission from the United Nations.

Then, in November 2004, Russia was suspected of interfering with federal elections in Ukraine, and providing support for the Kremlin’s “candidate,” Viktor Yanukovich, while being accused of sanctioning the attempted poisoning of pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. At the time, neighboring governments predicted Ukraine might split, particularly under the influence of “outside” (i.e. Russian) forces.

In addition to Ukraine, Russia’s relationship with Poland and several

other former Soviet states has been considered shaky at best over the past several years, with issues such as gas pricing as well as political and military interference causing the most damage.

Domestically, President Putin has also made several changes, primarily aimed at providing the Kremlin more power and control.

Early in Mr. Putin’s presidency, the focus appeared to be on the Russian media, previously owned by the Russian oligarchy. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Mr. Putin “has brought much of the once thriving post-Soviet media under indirect government control through the use of punitive tax audits and hostile takeovers. All three major television

networks are now in the hands of Kremlin loyalists.”

Critics of the government often encounter threats to their security.

Anna Politkovskaya—a journalist who ran a campaign exposing corruption in the Russian army and its handling of Chechnya—was shot to death, the 13th journalist killed in Russia in 2006.

In addition, Alexander Litvinenko, a former KGB agent who had accused his superiors of ordering the assassination of media mogul Boris Berezovsky, died from highly-suspicious radiation poisoning involving the rare polonium-210. Mr. Litvinenko was a vocal critic of the Putin administration, particularly regarding the way in which it came to power in 1999.

Tensions Rising

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has earned significant revenues from its tremendous wealth in oil and natural gas resources. These have also provided considerable diplomatic leverage with neighboring and purchasing states, including, perhaps most importantly, members of the European Union.

In January 2006, Russia brought Europe to a winter energy crisis when it threatened to cut natural gas deliveries to Ukraine, the primary route to the West. Moscow “turned off the tap” after Ukraine refused to sign a contract with Gazprom, Russia’s state-owned energy monopoly, in response to quadrupled prices. Some experts believe the price hike was punishment for the 2004 “Orange Revolution,” a series of Ukrainian protests and political events organized to thwart Russia’s influence.

The EU called for an emergency meeting of energy ministers. Mr. Putin used stern language as the deadline approached: “If no clear response [from Kiev] follows, we will conclude that our proposal has been rejected.”

In May 2006, both *Reuters* and the *EUObserver* reported that elements of World War II and the Cold War had returned, with tensions rising between some in Europe, Russia and the U.S.

During an April 30th transatlantic conference in Brussels, Polish Defense Minister Radek Sikorski compared the new Russian-German pipeline to the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (named after the Soviet and Nazi foreign ministers who divided Poland in a secret protocol).

The new pipeline, around 750 miles long and currently under construction, will link Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states. Poland has insisted that Germany should have consulted with other EU states before proceeding, to which EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs agreed. To this day, the issue remains a point of contention, causing the Polish government to veto a proposed EU-Russian energy deal in late 2006.

That August, the *Financial Times* reported that new OPEC statistics indicate Russia had surpassed Saudi Arabia as the world's largest producer of crude oil. Russia extracted 9.2 million barrels of oil—46,000 more than Saudi Arabia. Russia's production for the first half of the year was a 2.3% year-over-year improvement. The populist *Komsomolskaya Pravda* daily newspaper ran a story headlined, "Russia takes first place in oil output rankings."

Maintaining a Major Military Power

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the mainstream media misconstrued Russia as having become militarily weak. Images of the once-great Soviet army, navy and air force rusting away in "storage" were not uncommon in the 1990s.

Yet a 2004 *Wall Street Journal* editorial pointed to Russia as the leading threat to U.S. security. "[F]oreign policy elites in Washington have been misled by their own claims and have come to believe that the U.S. is now the world's only military superpower, holding an overwhelming advantage over any potential rival. This is patent nonsense."

"The Pentagon Budget may be larger than the sum total of what the rest of the world spends on defense,

but Russia can still incinerate all of the U.S. in about 15 minutes—hardly a condition for world domination by Washington."

Russia has continued to develop advanced weaponry, including new missile and nuclear technology. After more than ten years of inactivity, signs of "new life" have been detected at the underground nuclear testing facility on the Russian island of Novaya Zemlya.

Vladimir Smetanin, chief of administration at Belushya Guba, the capital of Russia's Central Nuclear Test Site, even admitted that the test site is (again) becoming a facility of "federal significance."

The *Izvestya* newspaper reported that the military had been tasked to ensure Russia's "nuclear deterrence," and it is continuing to work on "modernizing and improving the Russian nuclear arsenal."

The *Washington Times* reported in November 2005 that Moscow, in an attempt to possess the ability to penetrate the new U.S. missile-defense system, has been developing a warhead that can change course in mid-flight. Testing involved a Topol-M missile (designated by the Pentagon as the SS-27) that flew from the Kapustin Yar launch site in southern Russia.

Analysis by U.S. intelligence agencies indicates significant progress in the warhead's development, as it indeed dropped down to a lower trajectory and was able to maneuver. Current ballistic missiles do not alter their paths once they reach space, but this new Russian missile can, despite traveling at speeds of up to three miles per second. This is a major physical-engineering achievement, as any object traveling at such a speed is expected to disintegrate at the slightest change of course.

At a January 2006 news conference, Mr. Putin stated, "Russia...has tested missile systems that no one in the world has." He added, "These missile systems don't represent a response to a missile defense system, but they are immune to that. They are

hypersonic and capable of changing their flight path."

Not only is Russia still a major military power, developing and producing superior weapons, but the nation also exports its products to a select few.

Strengthening Ties

Historically, Russia and Iran have maintained a strategic relationship, along with Syria. Although Russia and China endured their difficulties during the 1960s and 70s, relations have dramatically turned for the better in the last 10-20 years; most would plainly identify their relationship as a strategic alliance.

In addition, Russia and Europe have increased cooperation in recent years. The EU offered Moscow a "most favored nation" status, which will ensure Russian exports the lowest possible EU tariffs—a direct trade benefit of 300 million euros (nearly \$400 million USD) a year.

According to the *Moscow Times*, the partnership deal will include cooperation in the following areas:

- Trade and EU investments in Russian transport
- Telecommunications and energy projects
- Cooperation in law enforcement and non-proliferation issues
- Settling border disputes with new EU members Estonia and Latvia
- Negotiations for visa-free travel for Russians in Western Europe

In a sign of a growing alliance, China and Russia held their first joint military exercise in August 2005. It involved 10,000 troops from land, air, naval, paratroop and marine forces. The size of the exercise underlines their governments' determination to strengthen and solidify their alliance.

As China's official news agency, *Xinhua*, described it, "The drills mainly aim to deepen Sino-Russian mutual trust, promote mutual friendship and enhance the cooperation and coordination of the two armed forces in the areas of defense and security."

Please see RUSSIA, page 16

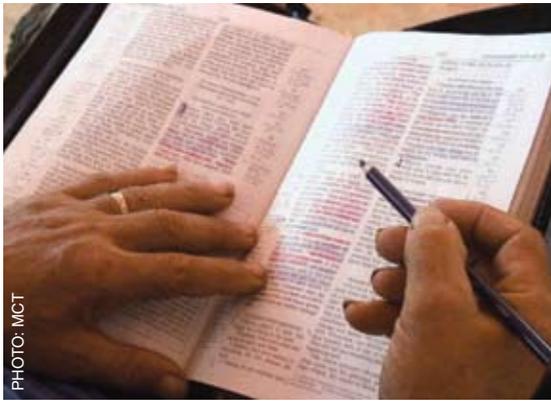


PHOTO: MCT

SEVEN QUESTIONS YOUR MINISTER DOES **NOT** WANT YOU TO ASK!

Each Sunday, hundreds of millions assume they are being taught truths from the Bible—not knowing that basic understanding is being withheld from them.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

IT HAS BEEN reported that over 61 million Bibles are sold or given away each year, with 92% of American households owning a copy. Such statistics explain why it holds the title “world’s bestseller”—yet, ironically, it is also the world’s most misunderstood book.

All seven points of what you are about to read are *never* taught in churches and are, in fact, suppressed from general understanding. Your minister, and most experienced Bible students, know of these truths, but choose to explain them away. While the Bible is a long and complex Book, the seven teachings described in this article can be easily proven.

The book of Isaiah describes God’s Word as a coded Book, with teachings found “here a little, and there a little” (28:10).

Most religious leaders have chosen to ignore what the Bible teaches—and seemingly fear to tell the truth! They also fear other things: admitting they have been deceived, and thus having deceived others; local deacons or members firing them for teaching biblical truth; their congregants leaving the fold. In all cases, they fear what *men* may

say or do, and give little or no thought to the fact that they are teaching against what God states in His Word!

What follows is simple, and the verses quoted are not open to human interpretation. They are seven basic questions your minister does not want you to ask this Sunday—but after they are revealed, it will be hard not to do so!

First, some background.

Satan—A Being of Light?

Blame for deception cannot be solely laid at the feet of those who claim to be ministers of Jesus Christ. There is *another* source, which drives the thinking of such religious leaders—and is key to understanding why basic truths of the Bible remain hidden. Notice: “In whom the *god of this world* has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Cor. 4:4).

The true God of the Bible does not deceive. Rather, He is using His servants to announce the gospel to the world—the good news of the soon-coming KINGDOM OF GOD—the central message His faithful servants have announced since “righteous Abel.”

Who is the “god of this world” who blinds—deceives—men? Allow God’s Word to explain: “And the great drag-

on was cast out, that old serpent, called the *Devil*, and *Satan*, which DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD” (Rev. 12:9).

As the one who deceives those of all nations, including their ministers, it is ultimately Satan who is responsible. However, God also holds people accountable—especially those who know they are teaching falsehoods, but continue to teach them, anyway.

(Yet, it must also be understood that there are those who truly believe what they teach. They may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong.)

Of course, a minister would never come out and say he is teaching doctrines “of Satan.” The devil’s deception is well-planned and extremely subtle. Just as he portrays himself as the God of the Bible, he portrays *his* ministers as ones teaching from the Bible: “For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:14-15). Ministers will always *appear* to be of God.

God’s view of such religious leaders is found in Ezekiel 22, verses 23 to 31 (as well as many other chapters of Ezekiel). While it is too long to quote in its entirety, it is critical to understand the language and tone God uses to describe deceitful ministers; terms such as “defiled,” “guilty,” “roaring lions ravaging the prey” who have “devoured souls,” having “put no difference between the holy and profane,” and acting as “wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls.”

Strong words!

However, what angers God the most? "...her prophets [ministers]... *divining lies* unto them [the people], saying, Thus says the Lord GOD, *when the LORD has not spoken*" (vs. 28).

You must have *knowledge* of what God has spoken. Only then will you be able to discern when a man preaches something "the LORD has not spoken."

Here then are seven questions your pastor hopes desperately you will not ask.

(1) "What is the Bible's Definition of Sin?"

One of the central points of the Bible is the difference between what God approves, and what He does not. There have been endless dissertations about the definition of sin—what is and is not sin. Yet the Bible defines sin with surprising simplicity: "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: *for sin is the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4). When someone transgresses or breaks "the law," he is sinning.

When one breaks man's laws, he earns a penalty, such as a fine, jail time or even (depending on the seriousness of the crime) death. Likewise, when we violate the laws of God, we earn a penalty: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Wages are something you earn as a payment for what you have done. If you sin—break God's Law—you will die (Ezek. 18:4, 20).

Suddenly, knowing what constitutes "the law" is of extreme importance! Again, we must allow God to explain what He means through *His Word*—not the reasoning or opinions of men.

(2) "What is God's Law?"

What should be an easy answer to the above question has been so twisted and mangled it needs more than a one or two scripture response. Greater "churchianity" has blurred the concept of what sin is and, by extension, has also butchered the definition of what constitutes God's Law.

However, this need not be complicated. One can spot through the Old and New Testaments and examine many scriptures in which the "law" or "commandments" are described. The first is

Genesis 26, where both words are found: "And I will make your seed to multiply as the stars of heaven...Because that Abraham *obeyed My voice*, and kept My charge, My **COMMANDMENTS**, My statutes, and My **LAWS**" (vs. 4-5).

Direct blessings come from keeping the commandments and laws of God. Throughout the Old Testament you will see that ancient Israel was told to keep God's Law.

Much confusion stems from differences between the laws of Moses—the civil laws of the nation—and the commandments of God—the Ten Commandments.

Jesus Christ had much to say about the Ten Commandments. Notice Jesus' statement in Matthew 5: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to **FULFILL**...not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (vs. 17-18, NASB).

The word "fulfill" (*pleroo* in the original Greek) means to "verify, fully preach, perfect, fill to the full." In other words, Christ came to verify and perfect the Ten Commandments, *expanding* their meaning. The same chapter is filled with examples of how the Ten Commandments are even more binding today. For instance, "...it was said of them of old time, You shall not kill... but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (vs. 21-22). Instead of abolishing the Sixth Commandment, Christ *magnified* it.

Much more could be said about how *all* Ten Commandments, including obedience of the seventh-day Sabbath, are found throughout the New Testament. (To look at these verses in more detail, read our article "Does the **NEW TESTAMENT** Teach *All TEN COMMANDMENTS*?")

The primary verse your minister will use to dismiss the scriptures above is found in Colossians 2. Let's read: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (vs. 14).

No doubt, you have heard that the Ten Commandments were "done

away" or "nailed to the cross." This is the verse used to support that claim. Examining the original Greek words that were translated into English removes *all* mystery about the subject of this verse. The word "ordinances" comes from the Greek word *dogma*, which means "a law (civil or ceremonial); public decrees; the rules and requirements of the law of Moses." This verse speaks of ordinances of men—"the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...contrary to us." This is not speaking of the Law of God, which Psalm 19 describes as "perfect," "sure," "right" and "pure," (vs. 7-8) and Paul states is "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). It was the ordinances of men—along with the death penalty we earned through sin—that were "nailed to the cross."

Your minister knows—or should know!—the meaning of that Greek word.

Are you beginning to see why God is angry with those who teach contrary to His Word? Multiple verses state that those who do not obey God and keep His laws do not have godly love (John 14:15) and are liars (I John 2:4).

Some assert that keeping the Ten Commandments is being "legalistic," stating that salvation is by grace. Does obeying the Law have anything to do with salvation? Remember, we have already seen that disobeying the Law results in death! How does grace and obeying the Ten Commandments connect to salvation? And does obeying the law—your works—mean you are trying to earn salvation?

(3) "Are We Saved by Just Grace—or Are Works Involved?"

Most assume that grace and works are mutually exclusive. The Bible says no such thing. In fact, you may be surprised that God's Word demonstrates *both* are required.

Think of it this way. When one is born in the United States, he is an American citizen. It does not matter the national origin of his parents, how much money he has, or any other factor; the process is automatic. However,

what one does with that citizenship is up to him. How hard he will work in school and how diligent he will be in the workforce will determine how successful he will be. It simply comes down to his *works*!

Grace and works are similar. Christians are *saved* by grace. There is nothing any person can do to earn salvation. It is wholly and completely a gift from God. No amount of commandment-keeping can make up for or atone for violating the Law. Only Jesus Christ's blood can do this.

However, your *reward* (John 14:2-3) in God's kingdom, after receiving salvation, is determined *by your works*. The commandments are ten laws that describe personal responsibility. That part you must *do*. Yet it is not you doing this, but Christ in you; and Christ in you will keep the same commandments He kept when He was in the flesh almost 2,000 years ago!

Again, do not believe any reasoning of man, but look directly into the pages of your Bible. Tying two passages together makes this clear:

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:4-10).

Clearly, Christians are not saved by works—but works are required: "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone...You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith *by my works*...But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?...See you how faith wrought [worked] with his works, and

by works was faith made perfect?" (Jms. 2:17-18, 20, 22).

The entire chapter goes into detail about how works and faith work together to perfect Christians. Christians demonstrate their faith in God by keeping His Law, yet it requires faith in Christ's power at work in the person for him to succeed.

(4) "Where Does It Say People Go to Heaven When They Die?"

Perhaps the most universally misunderstood truth about the Bible is in regard to what happens when one dies, whether he goes to heaven or hell for eternity. Countless millions believe—and hear their ministers preach—that we must "believe in Jesus" so we can "enter heaven" or be "saved in the rapture."

Conversely, it is said that all who do not "know Jesus in their hearts" will be, at death, instantly sent to hell, where they will suffer torment for eternity.

Is this concept biblical? Ask your minister to show you *any* passage that says you will go to heaven. If he attempts to twist or force Old Testament scriptures to say that Moses and Elijah are in heaven, then ask him why Jesus Christ so clearly stated, "And *no man has ascended up to heaven*" (John 3:13). Ask: Was Christ confused? Did Jesus Christ, as He worked with the Father, just never happen to bump into Moses and Elijah in heaven? Of course, this is ridiculous!

Then what does happen when you die? Examine how it is described in the book of Psalms: "His [man's] breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (146:4). Yes, when man dies, he stops breathing. His body returns to the earth. He has no thoughts—he knows absolutely nothing (Ecc. 9:5)!

To die means *to be dead*—the opposite of life. You have no thoughts, no concept of time; you are dead. Do not allow your minister to explain away these verses by simply saying that being in hell means being "cut off from God." The book of Isaiah shows that sin, of which we are all guilty

(Rom. 3:23), *already* cuts us off from God while we are alive (Isa. 59:2).

In God's eyes, human beings simply fall asleep when they die. However, like Christ, true Christians who die will be resurrected: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus [died in Christ] will God bring with Him [at His Second Coming]" (I Thes. 4:14). At Christ's Return, the saints will be raised from the dead and receive their reward. Until then, they are waiting to be resurrected.

The oft-quoted "beatitudes" describe this reward: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall INHERIT THE EARTH" (Matt. 5:5). This is quoted from Psalm 37:11. Space does not permit listing all the passages that explain a Christian's reward.

A loving, merciful God has a plan to offer salvation to all people who ever lived, but according to His timetable (Rev. 20:11-13). The true God wants *everyone* to make it into His kingdom. He is a caring God, who wants the best for mankind.

God is not some "cruel monster" who sends people to an eternally burning hell for being ignorant of Him and His Way. What kind of God would say He is described as love (I John 4:8), and then horribly torture billions because they had never heard of Him or the name of Christ through no fault of their own—in essence, refusing to give the masses a chance at salvation?

You should question the concept of the brutal god you hear described each week at church services—the one referred to as a trinity, a mystery that you cannot—and should not try to—understand!

(5) "Can the Trinity Be Proven in the Bible?"

You have seen four questions never truly answered at your church—and proof that the teachings of your minister completely contradict the plain words of the Bible. Actually, the problem goes much deeper. Each week you are being taught the lessons, teachings and doctrines of a *false god*. Shocking as it may sound, the deity your min-

ister teaches about is none other than the “god of this world”—packaged as the trinity.

How important is it that you are worshipping the *true* God of the Bible? Does it matter if you are off, even a little?

Think. If you worship the true God, but have other doctrines wrong, He can guide you to proper understanding. However, if you are wrong about which god to worship, you will never be led to understand other true biblical teachings. In fact, you will be led into more and more error! This is the single greatest reason all you have read so far is hidden from mankind. Your minister has been deceived by the devil into accepting a concept that he does not understand—that CANNOT be understood, and he will tell you not to try!

Ask your pastor to explain the trinity. Have him show you where God calls Himself a trinity. When he attempts to stretch verses, which require leaps of logic to draw any parallels, ask yourself: Would God leave something as important as His true identity so vague and difficult to prove? Of course not!

The word “trinity” is found nowhere in the Bible, and neither is the doctrine. In fact, finding no biblical evidence to support it, translators inserted a passage into the New Testament that had never existed before. This was their attempt to justify this teaching. Any honest minister would readily admit this. The inserted phrase (in italics) is found in I John 5: “For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*” (vs. 7-8).

The section first appeared in a manuscript written in the 8th century. Translators added it because the Bible makes no case for the trinity. Instead of correcting their teachings, they modified the Bible to suit their needs. Will you stand for such deceit on something as important as the nature of the true God?

(6) “Who is the God of the Old Testament?”

Perhaps the easiest of the seven questions to prove is the identity of the God of the Old Testament. You may be surprised to find the answer in the New Testament. So, without doubt, your preacher is familiar with it.

Regarding ancient Israel, the apostle Paul wrote, “And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that *spiritual Rock* that followed them: and that ROCK WAS CHRIST” (I Cor. 10:3-4).

How plain! Jesus Christ is the God of both the Old and New Testaments.

In both New and Old Testaments, Christ is described as the God who *never* changes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). Given what you have read thus far, this makes perfect sense. The New Testament teachings reflect the Old. The Law of God—the Ten Commandments—is still binding on Christians today. What happens when we die, what sin is and so many more doctrines are in complete agreement when compared to the Old Testament.

Again ask: Why have you been deceived? What causes your minister to hide these easily provable truths?

(Incredibly, the Bible speaks of “another Jesus.” To learn more, read our article “A Counterfeit ‘Jesus?’”, published in this issue.)

If these truths were taught, they would point to the true God of the Bible and, in turn, would point to the primary purpose of the New Testament—the establishment and building of Christ’s Church.

(7) “What is the Church Christ Built?”

Every major metropolis, city, village or one-stoplight town has something in common. They *all* have churches sprinkled throughout. Thousands of disagreeing and competing organizations seemingly cannot agree on anything.

Is Jesus part of the mass confusion that is professing Christianity? In the book of Amos, Christ, the God of the Old Testament, stated, “Can two

walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

In Matthew 16, Jesus stated, “I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (vs. 18). Christ said He would build His Church—singular! Not thousands of fighting and competing churches. Jesus further stated His Church would never disappear.

Your “job,” as one striving to be a Christian, is to seek out and find that Church! It is only from that Church you will receive true spiritual nourishment, which will allow you to develop and grow in perfect godly character.

Again, ask yourself: Why are you reading these seven truths here—in this magazine?

Christ built one—and only one—Church to carry out the commissions He set forth. There is only one Church that fulfills all the requirements found throughout the New Testament. It is that Church from which you are learning these and many more Bible truths.

Finally, ask yourself why you are following ministers who are deceiving you—when you can learn God’s Way, complete and unabridged?

You Must Act!

In a court of law, one’s complicity in a matter is summarized in three questions: What did you know? When did you know it? And what did you do about it when you found out?

The same can be asked of you. The purpose for your existence is much greater than any supposed eternity spent in heaven playing a harp. God has purposed in you a potential far beyond what you now dream.

Describing these last days, Paul wrote to Timothy, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (II Tim. 3:13). No longer do you have to be “deceived” by those doing the “deceiving.” But like a court of law, Christ will ask *you* what you did with the knowledge He gave you.

By this point, you will likely want to ask your minister about what you

Please see MINISTER, page 21



The Twisted, Perverse and Bizarre

PART II

BY KEVIN D. DENEÉ

THE FIRST PART of this series, published in last month's issue, served as an introduction and preview. It also began to discuss the topic of bizarre appearance.

Part Two will continue discussing this subject, and will also examine some of the weird and sickening behaviors displayed in society. Reader beware: This installment will address some of the most horrifying conduct of which you have ever heard.

It is important to repeat that we are not attacking or attempting to demean any particular individual. The purpose of this report is to show the *effects* of mankind's choices

■ **INNER PAIN AND SKEWED SELF-PERCEPTION:** Self-mutilation (upper left) is a growing trend among depressed teens searching for ways to cope with their inner anguish. The young woman shown (upper right) has been battling an eating disorder since she was 15. Studying herself in the mirror, she believes her arms look fat.

PHOTOS: MCT

(behavior). Some of the effects discussed here are real problems in the lives of real people. We are in no way trying to minimize these concerns, but rather are highlighting the seriousness and repercussions of humanity's decisions.

Self-Mutilation

In some respects, self-mutilation is only distantly related to the subject of appearance. This growing trend among teenagers is truly sobering. Young people throughout society are literally *cutting themselves* in order to draw blood and inflict pain. To outsiders looking in, this practice is hard to fathom.

But why do teens do this? To release tension and stress—to make themselves feel *better*.

Teenagers who self-mutilate almost always do so privately—and they try desperately to hide it. They are usually ashamed, but their embarrassment does not cause them to stop. They wear long sleeves, long skirts or pants—even in hot weather—to hide their many scars from the eyes of parents, friends and teachers.

Tragically, this trend is rapidly increasing, and parents and schools are finding it difficult to deal with the problem.

It is becoming so prevalent that teens are posting *personal self-mutilation videos* to the Internet, showing others what it is like. One video shows a person cutting himself with a scalpel. A report from *ABC News* states, "More and more kids are not just thinking about it, they're doing it. And they're showing others what it's like."

The same news report also states that "cutting" is the focal point of a growing subculture among kids. One teenager said, "I kind of felt...better afterwards. I liked it a lot...It kind of hurt, but...I guess when you cut...it...doesn't hurt that much because you're hurting so much inside...I just felt like...cutting kind of hurt a little, but I felt like I was actually releasing my anger...I would...go into the bathroom, or in gym, I would skip gym, or sometimes, I'd just be sitting there, and no one noticed that I was just cutting."

A doctor specializing in self-mutilation stated, "It's becoming an acceptable activity...it's now becoming more popular among the adolescents, it's a way of releasing their stress, it's a way of coping, I guess, and it's a way of uniting in their own pain...I can say that it is increasing, and that it is more prevalent now...The concern now is that it's becoming more of a social event, where girls and boys invite each other for cutting parties..."

The doctor went on to say that it is becoming mainstream—the popular crowd is now doing it too. Truly, the abnormal is becoming normal.

Not knowing the true purpose of life—lacking knowledge that gives meaning to one's existence—humanity turns to various physical pursuits to fill the void. Yet people are ultimately left unsatisfied.

Deathly Thin

While eating disorders (usually among women) have been a growing problem for several decades, the entertainment industry essentially glamorizes such health problems by putting severely underweight celebrities on a pedestal. Their bony frames are upheld as the "ideal" figure to attain.

Once an individual has a full-blown eating disorder, it is hard to pull her back. Even when painfully thin, literally on the verge of death, it is difficult to convince the person she is not overweight. Family, friends, even respected professionals, sometimes cannot prevent people from starving themselves to death.

There are websites that glorify anorexia and bulimia. The *BBC* reports, "Experts say so-called 'pro-ana' sites claim to offer support, but actually glorify the diseases and discourage people from seeking medical treatment."

New terms such as "thinspiration" are commonly used. Coded phrases such as "My friend Ana" and "My friend Mia" refer to anorexia and bulimia, respectively.

As mentioned, the fashion industry and elements of Hollywood are also influencing people toward eating disorders. Size zero models are commonplace on the catwalks of fashion shows. A popular model died from kidney failure in November 2006. She ate only apples and tomatoes, and would not admit she had an illness. Another died earlier that year from a heart attack—after consuming only lettuce leaves and Diet Coke for three months.

Despite these needless tragedies, the fashion industry continues to have a demand for thin models. Women who are clinically underweight are told they have "great bodies," as women of normal weight are told the opposite. Some in the industry are not interested in countering the rise in eating disorders among young women.

Many patients struggling with these types of disorders have been "hospitalized more than once for suicide attempts, dehydration or other conditions brought on by their disorders... All are slender or dangerously thin, and all see themselves as fat or fear that they will become fat. A scale reading over 100 pounds can cause them extreme anxiety" (*Daily Bulletin*).

One sufferer commented, "I've tried to find satisfaction in other accomplishments, but nothing measures up to this goal of being thin, and that's all

I really want. And if it takes dying to get there, so be it."

In the Media

Mainstream media is also on a path toward the bizarre. Wholesome "family" shows are disappearing; in their place are boundary-pushing programs.

For instance, in the last decade there has been a steadily increasing focus on the supernatural, with television shows such as *Medium* and *Heroes* becoming widely popular, which follow characters struggling to make sense of their various "powers."

Then there are the magic and illusion television shows, two of which are quite popular. The atmosphere of these productions is dark and strange, and the programs present unexplainable magic tricks. For example, a man walks through a glass window, yet the window remains intact. Sometimes, performers will exhibit feats of superhuman strength. Viewers are fascinated by such programs, yet they do not comprehend the real source that is oftentimes behind the magicians' power.

These types of shows have also showcased what is called "suspension." In fact, there are "suspension parties," events in which attendees literally suspend themselves from the ceiling through hooks in their skin! Those who have tried this claim it offers a "spiritual experience."

Of course, our look at the media would not be complete without addressing horror films, which have become much more hideous and extreme, while exploding in popularity.

A film review of the movie *Saw III* stated, "...the splatter flicks of yesteryear were usually too silly to be taken seriously...[but now] killers in the 'claustrophobic cruelty' sub-genre are interested in making their victims scream, weep, beg for mercy, watching in pleasure as their victim's bodies and souls are deformed beyond recognition...genuinely sickening stuff."

These movies continually portray more and more gore—a demand of the ticket-purchasing public. But, as this

film critic goes on to write, the audience is “going to be watching something that would likely have gotten the filmmakers arrested 60 years ago.”

In regard to the film, the *BBC* reported that “staff at a UK cinema have had to call emergency services three times in one night because of a spate of people passing out...” At the time the *BBC* article was written, the movie was ranked number one in the UK and North America.

Finally, there is the independent film industry, which is always ready to “push the envelope” of acceptable behavior in society. For example, *The Seattle Times* reported that the Sundance Film Festival accepted a documentary called “Zoo,” which addresses bestiality and “examines the widely reported case of a...man who died in 2005 after having sex with a horse.” This film was 1 of 16 accepted out of 856 submitted.

Higher Education?

Parts of higher education are also marching toward the odd. Here are just some of the bizarre college courses now available, according to *Young America's Foundation*:

- “Queer Musicology”
- “The Phallus”
- “Adultery Novel”
- “Sex Change City: Theorizing History in Genderqueer San Francisco”
- “Lesbian Pulp Fiction”

It seems the latest popular perversion now takes place in some of the most elite colleges of the United States: the arrival of “naked parties.” Ironically, students who participate in

them claim that such parties are non-sexual. One college student stated, “Naked parties are ‘the #1’ thing to do before graduation” (*The Scotsman*). Some students even claim they are life-changing experiences.

Regarding naked parties, one Yale student said, “The dynamic is completely different from a clothed party. People are so conscious of how they’re coming across that conversations end up being more sophisticated.” Some parties are even held in college libraries, with the school administrators turning a blind eye!

Many claim this is normal and should not be criticized—it is merely young adults “expressing” themselves. But is this really just harmless fun?

“Vile Affections”

Then there are perverse relationships of all kinds: Some actually believe intimate relations with *anyone* or *anything* should be allowed—including animals, children and even corpses. Everything imaginable is now being done openly and is pushed to be accepted by all.

The Bible describes what has happened to mankind: “For this cause God gave them up unto *vile affections*... working that which is *unseemly*, and receiving in themselves that *recompense* of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate [degenerate, void of judgment] mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:26-28).

It has gone so far that even online dating has evolved. A person can now

sign in to online role-playing games, select a character with whatever attributes he chooses, and look for an online “date” with another character, who is a real person somewhere else in the world. The couple can then engage in whatever they desire.

Gender-Bending

The subject of gender lines and gender confusion continues to be a topic of discussion and controversy in the 21st century. The *New York Times* article “New York Plans to Make Gender Personal Choice” stated the following: “New York City is moving forward with a plan to let people alter the sex on their birth certificate even if they have not had sex-change surgery.” All an individual must do is provide affidavits from a doctor stating why the person should be considered to change the legal status of his or her sex. This is taking place because many “transgender” people cannot afford surgery or therapy.

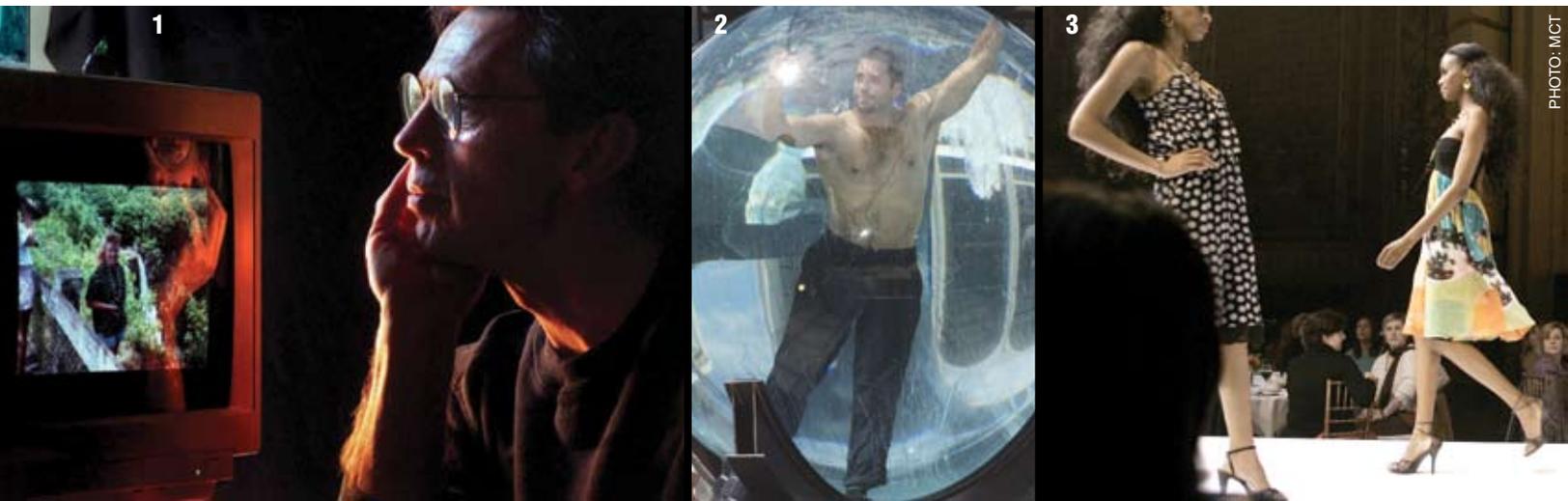
This leads to, as the article states, “intriguing” questions: “For example, would a man who becomes a woman be able to marry another man?... Would an adoption agency be able to uncover the original sex of a proposed parent?... Would a woman who becomes a man be able to fight in combat, or play in the National Football League?”

However, these are *not* intriguing questions, these are RIDICULOUS questions—an effect of mankind living a way of life totally cut off from its Creator!

Consider another bizarre trend,

Please see BIZARRE, page 18

■ **INCREASINGLY ODD BEHAVIOR:** (1) Many today participate in online dating—often to engage in “alternative lifestyles.” (2) A performance artist attempts to spend seven days in a water-filled sphere. (3) The fashion industry continues to demand thinner models.



A C O U N T E R F E I T

“JESUS”?

MILLIONS PROFESS TO “FOLLOW JESUS,” BUT ARE THEY ALL WORSHIPPING THE JESUS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE?

BY CHET R. ECHELBARGER

WHAT FIRST comes to your mind when you hear the word *counterfeit*?

Perhaps you think of counterfeit money. Counterfeiting currency is probably as old as money itself. Professional counterfeiters can turn out a product that is virtually impossible to distinguish from the genuine by the untrained eye. Even before the introduction of paper money, counterfeiters mixed base metals into what was supposed to be pure gold or silver, or “shaved” the edges of a coin so that it weighed less than intended.

Label counterfeiting is also an ongoing problem in today’s global economy. This involves cheap knockoffs that imitate quality products. They carry the same logo, but are made with low-grade materials and carry a much lower price tag. Preoccupied with the thrill of a perceived bargain, the buyer is caught unaware. When the item’s performance proves to be inferior, disappointment sets in.

But such deception can reach beyond consumer products. Consider that we can also be taken in on religious matters. A surprising number of Christians around the world—while sincere—have been misled by religious leaders. Are you sure what you are being “sold” is genuine? For instance, are you aware that the Bible mentions *two* persons called “Jesus”?

The apostle Paul forewarned of a clever counterfeit facing the early Church: “For if he that comes preaches

another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive *another spirit*, which you have not received, or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him” (II Cor. 11:4).

Paul was afraid that if false teachers came to the Corinthian congregation and preached “another Jesus” or “another gospel,” they would tolerate this instead of rejecting them. How many spend time determining if they are following the right Jesus? Could you believe a *different* gospel, brought by a *different* spirit? Is the Jesus you know the *real* Jesus?

Portrayals of Jesus

What is Paul talking about when he speaks of “another Jesus”? The Greek word translated “another” in this verse is *allos*, meaning “different.” We are considering a *different* Jesus—not the One of the Bible, *not* the only begotten Son of God, but an impostor.

Many ideas and practices that have absolutely no scriptural basis have been accepted by mainstream Christianity. These practices, introduced gradually by false teachers, have been accepted through tradition. This was also foretold: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies” (II Pet. 2:1).

For example, many Christians have grown up exposed to illustrations of what they believe to be the Son of God. Most artists’ renderings of Jesus picture him in a helpless state, at the beginning or end of his life—either as a newborn or hanging on a cross.

During the Christmas season, Christianity venerates “little Lord Jesus,” portraying him as an infant in a manger, “tender and mild.”

Often found behind the pulpit in churches, many paintings or statues of Jesus display a gaunt, forlorn, long-haired man who often has his hands clasped in a prayerful position, gazing upward. Even Jesus’ death has been trivialized, depicting him with a slight trickle of blood oozing from the crown of thorns piercing his head, and another from wounds in each of his hands. Some artists even insert a “sacred heart” with a crack running through the center, depicting Jesus as having died of a “broken heart.”

Traditional Ceremonies

Every spring, millions gather early Easter morning to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. These annual sunrise services supposedly remind them that Jesus rose from the dead. Yet this tradition springs from ancient sun worship rituals that predate Christ’s earthly ministry.

Later in the year, adherents look forward to trading gifts on his “birthday” (supposedly December 25th), and become enveloped in the “spirit of Christmas.”

Have you not wondered why there are so many non-biblical customs surrounding holidays that are purported to honor the Jesus Christ of the Bible?

Worship Based on Emotion

In much of Christianity today there has been a shift toward a new center, which may loosely be described as a shift from mind to emotion. The modern demand is for a religious “worship” experience that stresses feelings above reason, logic and doctrine.

Many have abandoned biblically-defined worship and adopted religious entertainment, calling it worship. They have a pretense of Christianity, but it is only a façade, as Paul wrote: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (II Tim. 3:5).

For many, the final authority in matters of faith and morals is no longer the Word of God, but the inner workings of the human mind. Some denominations view the Bible as merely a historical document requiring human interpretation to correct its “errors.”

People can unknowingly worship in ways that are far different from what they sincerely believe or intend. Grasp what is at stake with another Jesus. With a different savior ultimately comes a different “mediator,” “high priest,” “shepherd,” “bishop of our souls,” “apostle,” “king of kings,” “lord of lords,” and all of Christ’s other titles and roles.

When one does not understand the “simplicity in Christ” (II Cor. 11:3) and allow the Bible to interpret itself, the inevitable result is to soon be unwittingly following a very different savior (vs. 4).

Nullifying the Law

The Jesus commonly spoken of in the large denominations of accepted Christianity promotes the idea that keeping God’s divine laws is no longer needed because they have been “nailed to the cross.” All a Christian must do is “accept and believe in him” to be assured a place in heaven. Beguiled by this notion, the majority reject the seventh-day Sabbath, the annual Holy Days and other truths of the Bible, leaving an open door for a host of non-biblical practices. The first-century apostles resisted this slippery path into lawlessness, but many believers allowed themselves to be led astray.

Paul foretold a time when fables and the traditions of men would be substituted for the truth: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they

shall *turn away their ears from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Tim. 4:3-4).

This deception began in the first century but has grown much worse in recent times. Most receive teachers who tell them what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Wrong conduct is justified—explained away—giving no regard to the warning, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20).

The Gospel

Paul wrote of “another gospel” and “another spirit,” appearing in conjunction with this other “Jesus.” When one examines the facts of history, it becomes evident that traditional Christianity brought in a different Jesus, and with him came a different gospel.

The one impersonating the true Son of God brought a social gospel of “love” and “tolerance”—one that does not require any personal responsibility, such as repentance. Its message is just “come as you are” and “believe on him” to receive salvation.

Today we hear a great deal *about* the person of Jesus Christ—confining the message solely to the things *about* the Son of God, but not about the message He brought. As a result, millions believe *on* Jesus, but do not BELIEVE Him—what He taught!

Notice Mark 1:14: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” The real Christ brought a message from His Father: news of the soon-coming kingdom of God—a SUPERGOVERNMENT that will teach humanity to obey His Law, which leads to achieving the abundant life all have longed for, but were never able to realize.

There are many different “gospels” being offered, such as the gospel of salvation, the gospel of grace, the social gospel, and many other hybrids.

How important is it to believe the real gospel the true Jesus brought? In Mark 16:16, the resurrected Christ

said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

This is not a trivial matter. Eternity is at stake! It is so important that God inspired Paul to write, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, [the same gospel Jesus preached] let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Again, it is so important that Paul reiterates it in verse 9: “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.”

Is your minister cautioning you on the dangers of these counterfeits? If not, why? (See our article “Seven Questions Your Minister Does Not Want You to Ask,” published in this issue).

Spirit of Error

Observed objectively, when you compare the worship described in the Bible to modern Christianity, they appear as two totally different religions. The terminology is similar, like counterfeit labels on bootleg items. The names of the lead characters are the same, but the *substance* is different. Do “Christianized” traditions of men honor God—or someone else?

The different spirit bringing these erroneous gospels emanates from the master counterfeiter whom the Bible calls the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4). Seeking to counterfeit every aspect of God’s Plan, this powerful being “deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). His spirit influences and directs human agents whom he uses to fulfill his will: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:13-14).

Now that you have read about the counterfeit “Jesus,” we must ask, “Who and what is the *real* Jesus Christ of the Bible?”

This will be thoroughly answered in Part Two, to be published in the March-April issue. □

A NUCLEAR MIDDLE EAST?

IS TIME RUNNING OUT FOR ISRAEL?

THE SPECTER OF the volatile Middle East turning into a nuclear battlefield looms ever closer to reality as Iran defies global opinion, feverishly strives (as the international community suspects) to develop atomic weapons and repeatedly calls for Israel's utter destruction.

Some say that time is running out for Israel to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons complex before Tehran has the capability to launch long-range missiles tipped with nuclear warheads aimed at Tel Aviv or other Israeli cities. The prospect of mushroom clouds casting long shadows over this strategic region of the world is not out of the realm of possibility!

Britain's *The Sunday Times* caused a worldwide stir when it reported in early January that Israeli pilots were training to strike an underground uranium enrichment plant south of Tehran with low-yield "bunker buster" nuclear weapons, as well as two other Iranian nuclear sites with conventional bombs.

The Times reported that Israeli military officials believe Iran could produce enough enriched uranium to build nuclear weapons within two years, and that Israeli pilots had made flights to Gibraltar to train for the 2,000-mile round trip to the Iranian targets. It has been widely presumed since the 1970s that Israel has nuclear weapons in its arsenal.

Despite international criticism, controversial Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad refuses to back down

from his threats to "wipe Israel off the map." Meanwhile, the leaders of Israel have vowed they will not allow another holocaust to be unleashed on its millions of citizens, comparing Mr. Ahmadinejad's threats to Adolf Hitler's rants in Nazi Germany.

On January 24, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told an annual security conference that Israel will respond to an Iranian nuclear threat "with all the means at our disposal." He said nations of the world have no choice but to act forcefully against Iran and Mr. Ahmadinejad.

despite Israel's successful 1981 air strike against an atomic reactor in Iraq, many conclude Israel cannot take on Iran's nuclear facilities without support from other nations.

Some observers view President George W. Bush's decision to dispatch another aircraft carrier battle group to the Persian Gulf, create a "troop surge" of 20,000 more soldiers in Iraq, along with deploying more Patriot missiles to U.S. military bases in the region, as keeping his options open in the event of a military attack on Iran.

On January 26, President Bush denied his administration was preparing military action against Iran, but

he did confirm he authorized U.S. troops to hunt down or take out Iranian operatives in Iraq. Some view this order as a prelude to tougher action. Two weeks earlier, he pledged to "interrupt the flow of support [for extremists in Iraq] from Iran and Syria... We will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq."

In his State of the Union address to Congress, Mr. Bush linked Iran with al-Qaeda, the terrorist group blamed for the 9/11 attacks that killed 3,000 Americans. In a short statement to commemorate International Holocaust Day, Iran was the

only country the President cited by name: "The Iranian regime...perversely seeks to call into question the historical fact of the Nazis' campaign of mass murder."

Meanwhile, Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), warned that Iran expects to start installing at least 3,000 centrifuges in its enrichment plant in February, accelerating its ability to create dozens of nucle-

MILITARY PROFILE

	IRAN 	ISRAEL 
Active Armed Forces	545,000	168,300
Reserves	350,000	408,000
Paramilitary	40,000	8,050
Selected Equipment	1,670 tanks One fleet 281 combat planes More than 5,000 missiles	3,660 tanks Four fleets 402 combat planes About 1,500 missiles Believed to have up to 200 nuclear warheads

SOURCE: MCT; Military Balance; Global Security

OPINION POLL: Percent of Iranians who say that...

- 84%** "It is very important for Iran to have the capacity to enrich uranium."
- 66%** "Iran should participate in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

SOURCE: WorldPublicOpinion.org with 1,000 Iranians, Oct. 31-Dec. 6, 2006

"When the leader of a country announces, officially and publicly, his country's intention to wipe off the map another country, and creates those tools which will allow them to realize their stated threat, no nation has the right to even weigh its position," Mr. Olmert said. "It is the obligation of every country to act against this with all its might."

Israel is still weighing preemptive military action against Iran. However,

ar warheads each year. Centrifuges enrich uranium and can be used to make nuclear energy or nuclear weaponry.

In December, the UN Security Council passed 15-0 a resolution imposing sanctions on Iran for its repeated refusal to cooperate fully with the IAEA or to suspend uranium enrichment. Mr. ElBaradei is to report to the council by February 21 on whether Iran has suspended enrichment. If it has not, sanctions could be tightened.

In its January 29 issue, *Aviation Week & Space Technology* reported that Iran has converted one of its most powerful ballistic missiles into a satellite launch vehicle. The 30-ton rocket could be used to test longer-range missile strike technologies. "Orbiting its own satellite would also send a powerful message throughout the Muslim world about the Shiite regime in Tehran."

Fired from Iran, the rocket has the capability of striking anywhere in Israel, Saudi Arabia, the entire Persian Gulf region and as far as Turkey. The West is worried that upgrades could

lead to the creation of an Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a nearly 2,500-mile range—giving Tehran the ability to strike as far as central Europe, Russia, China and India.

A U.S. congressional report in November 2006 reinforced concerns over Iranian and North Korean missile technology ties. Israel's military intelligence chief indicated that North Korea has shipped to Iran 18 ballistic missiles with a range of 1,500 miles and the capability to carry nuclear warheads.

Meanwhile, some Israelis are wondering if they can put confidence in America's will to protect their tiny nation from the overwhelming force of the Islamic countries surrounding them.

Some sources indicate an Israeli nuclear attack against Iran will be launched before the November 2008 U.S. presidential election. "In order to make absolutely certain of success in one short duration operation...we believe the Israelis will be forced to think the unthinkable—nuclear!" *NewsMax* reported. "We believe an

Israeli attack is pending. It is just a question of when."

Could the world soon wake up one day to learn the Israelis have initiated the first nuclear military attack since the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945? Bible prophecy shows that in the last days the hand of Judah, the father of the Jews, would be on the neck of his enemies, and he would be like a crouched young lion ready to pounce (Gen. 49:8-9). It also shows the leaders of Judah will be "like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left" (Zech. 12:6 – NKJV).

With more countries vying for nuclear weapons, the world is becoming extremely dangerous. At the end of January, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* moved the minute hand of the legendary Doomsday Clock forward by two minutes to show the world is only five minutes from the ultimate catastrophe brought on by nuclear war or other factors. The danger worsens with each passing day! □

RUSSIA

Continued from page 5

The war games came as Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov visited Beijing and was expected to discuss increasing Moscow's multibillion-dollar annual arms sales to China.

President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China told Mr. Ivanov, "We want...to promote the development of the two countries' strategic collaborative relationship in order to safeguard and promote regional and world peace" (*China News Service*).

The former Cold War rivals have built up military and political ties since the Soviet Union's collapse, driven in part by a joint desire to counter-balance U.S. global dominance.

China has become Russia's largest customer for military technology and products. While the U.S. and the EU have banned weapons exports to

China since its 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests, Russia has greatly assisted in advancing and growing the Chinese military, supplying it with high-performance Su-27 fighters and other advanced arms.

In March 2006, the *BBC* reported that Beijing and Moscow had strengthened their alliance again with the signing of a major natural gas deal. This was only 1 of 15 agreements made to promote commercial cooperation between the two resurgent powers. President Putin, along with a 90-member delegation, visited Beijing for two days at that time. While a major oil deal was elusive, Messrs. Putin and Hu pledged stronger ties in the telecommunications and transport sectors.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry described ties between the two countries as at "a very high level." China imports significant resources as well as advanced military equipment from Russia.

In April of that year, as the UN tried to grapple with how to deal with Iran's progressing nuclear program, Russia and China issued warnings not to antagonize Iran. Both countries have increasing economic and strategic ties with Tehran. Any international crisis involving their new ally would certainly force their hands.

Russia in Bible Prophecy

An empire is emerging in Europe; in fact this will ultimately become the seventh and final restoration of the Holy Roman Empire, as revealed in Revelation 17:8, 12. (You may wish to read *OUT OF THE ASHES: The Rise of Europe*.) It is likely that the current, cautious cooperation between Europe and Russia will continue.

However, it will be short-lived! Europe will have established some control over parts of the Middle East (Dan. 11:41-43), but Russia and her allies (China, possibly also India and

RUSSIA-BELARUS OIL DISPUTE

As this article was written, the Russia-Belarus energy dispute was raised to crisis levels. Belarus, a former Soviet state, began blocking the transit of Russian oil through its pipeline to European countries.

A spokesman for PERN, the Polish pipeline company, told *AFP*, "Deliveries were disrupted overnight and then totally cut off Monday morning on the main Druzhba pipeline, which supplies crude oil to Poland and Germany. Fifty million tons of crude pass through the Druzhba pipeline each year. Of that, 18 million tons are supplied to Poland and 22 million tons to the German refineries of Schwedt and Mider Spergau."

Just a week or so earlier, Russia and Belarus had come to a begrudging agreement regarding natural gas, with Belarus eventually accepting a doubling of prices. Belneftekhim, a Belarusian industrial and energy holding company, had ordered the suspension of the transit of oil through the Druzhba, or "friendship," pipeline, which supplies Germany, Poland and Ukraine. Contacted by the *Associated Press*, officials from Belneftekhim declined to comment.

The head of Transneft, the Russian state pipeline operator, said, "On Jan. 6 the Belarusian side, without warning anyone, unilaterally started illegally siphoning off oil from the Druzhba pipeline designed solely for the transportation of oil to consumers in Western Europe," stating that Belarus had diverted 79,000 tons of oil.

A week earlier, Belarus had announced it would charge an import duty of \$45 per metric ton on Russian oil shipped to Western Europe in pipelines that crossed the country. That

move had been in response to Russia imposing an export duty of \$180 a ton on oil sold to Belarus. With Russia refusing to pay the duty, Belarus began to take oil off the pipeline. In response, Russia simply stopped the flow of oil.

European energy supply disruption—particularly from Russia—through former Soviet states has been an ongoing concern for several years now. In 2006, Russia and Ukraine were in a similar dispute. Poland's deputy economy minister told TVN24 television, "This shows us once again that arguments among

on to state that the current conflict reinforced the point that Europe's energy sources needed to be more diverse.

Russia's Energy Minister Viktor Kristenko replied that the pipeline closure constituted a "force majeure"—which refers to a situation in which the events are beyond the country's control, therefore freeing it of any related obligations.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin warned that his country might have to reduce oil output. Some experts suggest this was a sign he was hoping to force

Belarus into a climb-down. "It's necessary to secure the interests of Russian companies that have obviously encountered losses," Mr. Putin added.

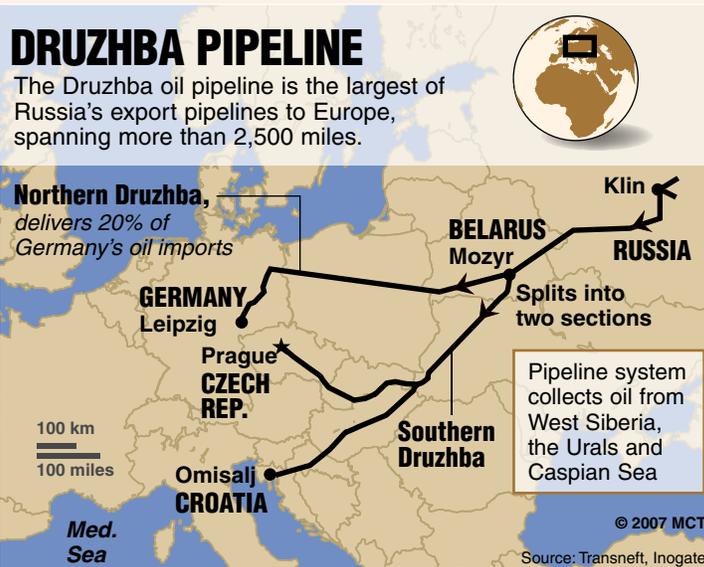
Supply to the pipeline has since been restored. However, as Andrew Rettman of the *EUObserver* wrote, the "damage is done." Reacting to a deal that had been reached earlier that day, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso remained luke-warm, saying, "...you should inform your partner first, before making any closure. We have an addiction to energy and like

anything else, it's worse if you depend on someone else for that addiction."

Details of the agreement remain unclear, with the EU and the International Energy Agency (IEA) still annoyed that they have not been kept in the loop.

"This lack of information is much worse than the actual disruption in supply," IEA executive director Claude Mandil told *EUObserver*.

Interestingly, a significant part of Brussels' new energy policy is devoted to reducing dependency on Russian oil. This could produce interesting geopolitical possibilities in the near future. □



various countries of the former Soviet Union, between suppliers and transit countries, mean that these deliveries are unreliable from our perspective."

The supply disruption would apparently have little impact on day-to-day operations, due to strategic reserves. The EU's energy chief indicated that Poland had 70 days of reserves and Germany 130 days.

Russia was then "condemned" by the European Union for cutting off the oil supply without consultation. German Chancellor Angela Merkel dubbed the move "unacceptable" and one that "destroyed trust" in Russia. She went

others from Asia) will attempt to exert their own control in the region (vs. 44), causing the European power to make a preemptive strike (Rev. 9:1-10). For more details, you may wish to read *REVELATION—Explained at Last!*

And yet, shortly following that, the opposing armies will actually join

forces once again, this time to fight Jesus Christ at His Second Coming (Rev. 16:14; 17:14; 19:17-21).

Even after the Return of Jesus Christ, perhaps within a few years of the beginning of His reign, Russia, in league with the armies of Asia, will once again attempt to invade the

region of Jerusalem (Ezek. 38; 39:1-12). But this attack will fail.

Finally, the whole world will come to realize that God is in charge (38:23). Like all other nations, Russia, a great people and country, will submit to the government of God. Peace, prosperity and truth will abound! □

BIZARRE

Continued from page 12

again reported by *The New York Times*: Homosexuals who are friends with lesbian couples are donating their sperm so the couple can have babies. The “father” usually wants to retain some rights, and hold a sort of “uncle” position in the family—in other words, he wants to be able to see the child on birthdays and holidays, and share in a family.

Since they cannot have children on their own, they are creating a twisted, entirely different extended family.

Suicide Cliques

The Internet is now the place where suicide cliques form. Within seconds one can read of those who have committed suicide, along with entire manuals on the subject!

People are meeting through the Internet, and then killing themselves together. The *New Zealand Herald* reported, “Young Japanese are joining group-suicide pacts in record numbers despite efforts to crack down on the bizarre internet-led phenomenon.”

“Many opt for carbon monoxide poisoning in sealed vehicles, often in secluded or scenic areas, like four men who died while watching the sun rise at the foot of Mount Fuji. The men met for the first time just hours before.”

“Dozens of young Japanese can be found every day discussing suicide online. A typical message reads: ‘If you are thinking about killing yourself, please reply.’ Another says: ‘I’m in my early 20s and I want to die easily. Can go anywhere in Japan.’”

It is sobering to find questions such as the following online: “What is the best way to kill yourself when you’re under 13?”

But suicide is not the only way people try to harm themselves.

“Bug Chasers”

This may be the most nauseating “vile affection” (recall Romans 1) that men have embraced. A new term has been

coined: “bug chaser”—a person who does not have HIV or AIDS, *but tries to get it!* It is claimed that this is the “ultimate experience”! UNBELIEVABLE, but true!

Here is how one writer explains this lifestyle: “In gay nightclubs across the U.S. men wear sleeveless shirts in hopes that someone will notice the tattoo ‘HIV-’ blazoned across their deltoid. What is not so obvious is that the intention of such a tattoo is to attract someone who is HIV+. It is an invitation to infect...In other words, the

“People are meeting through the Internet, and then killing themselves together.”

tattooed man is intentionally seeking an HIV+ partner to infect him with the virus. All that is left is a trip back to the tattoo artist to have that tattoo adjusted from negative to positive. Simple” (*Alternatives Magazine*).

A sound mind cannot imagine why a person would seek out such a disease. But it happens!

The article continues, “In private... clubs across the U.S. men gather for a chance to participate in what is called Russian Roulette. Ten men are invited, nine are HIV-, one is HIV+. The men have agreed to not speak of AIDS, nor HIV. They participate in as many unsafe...encounters with each other as possible, thus increasing their chances to receive ‘the bug.’ These are the men known as ‘Bug Chasers.’”

Why?

Some want to “belong”; others “do not want to worry” about acquiring HIV anymore; some see it “as the deepest level of intimacy.” In a sense, this is similar to people who cut themselves. The following quote provides an explanation: “Self Injurious Behavior may have several motivations...Self injurers say that their

behavior offers: ‘escape from emptiness, depression...relief from intense feelings...an expression of emotional pain...escaping numbness...a feeling of euphoria...a relief of anger...a sense of control over one’s body...expressing or coping with feelings of alienation’” (ibid.).

As mentioned in Part One of this series, the modern world is sick, rotting to its core.

But it gets worse...

Unheard of Horrors

We live in a world in which there are groups of people who are in love with death. There are websites that display pictures of dead bodies. And this is provided for the people who have “incurable gross-out” desires, as the term is used. There is an entire industry catering to people who want “snuff” films—movies that feature footage of people being killed. In fact, an avid demand exists for these movies. Even worse, sometimes the ones being killed are children. And, we repeat, there is a strong *demand* for this!

Absolutely disgusting, horrifying and inconceivable!

The last story that will be mentioned in this part of the series is so sickening that it can only be briefly described. In 2003, a German man was charged with killing and eating another man. Certainly, in particular cultures cannibalism has existed for millennia. However, what makes this account so exceptionally shocking is that the man who was charged with the crime had actually advertised on the Internet, seeking someone who was healthy and *wanted* to be eaten! He found such a “volunteer”—the things they did are unspeakable (Eph. 5:12). In the end, he ate the man and claimed afterward that he felt much better and more mentally stable.

How sick can this world get? Apparently much worse. How are human beings capable of committing such actions? What drives them to indulge in such abhorrent activities?

The answers will be explained in Part Three. □

MIDDLE EAST

Lebanon's Unrest Edges Toward Civil War



PHOTO: MCT

■ A vocal critic of Syria's military presence in and political domination of Lebanon, Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel's life was taken November 21, 2006—the third member of his family to be assassinated in 25 years. His death, along with other events, has served to stoke the fires of nationwide civil unrest.

The peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins that began December 1 and quickly escalated into violent clashes between pro- and anti-government groups continue to fuel the flames of yet another potential civil war in Lebanon.

Backed by Syria and Iran, the Shia group Hezbollah, along with several other parties, opposes the current Lebanese government, led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. His anti-Syrian government was formed after Syria reluctantly withdrew from the nation two years ago.

In the aftermath of last summer's war in Lebanon, Hezbollah declared victory after Israel failed to halt incoming rocket and mortar attacks, eliminate Hezbollah's leadership and rescue its two captured soldiers. Emboldened by this and Beirut's failure to effectively combat Israeli forces, Hezbollah seeks



to create a national unity government, demanding more than a third of the Cabinet seats. This would give the pro-Syrian terrorist organization veto power and the ability to collapse the current government. Syria would then again have strong influence over Lebanese affairs.

The governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan have voiced their support for the Siniora administration, which has the support of the United States and France.

With Washington viewing Lebanon as yet another battlefield in the war on terror, many see the current struggle as a global standoff between the U.S. and Iran, along with Syria. Jordan's King Abdullah II has warned that the international community might witness three civil wars this year: one in Iraq, another in the Palestinian territories, and one in Lebanon. □

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

State Lawmaker Proposes Anti-Spanking Bill

Controversy has erupted in California over a proposed anti-spanking bill for children under the age of four. If the bill, to be presented this week in the state legislature, is accepted, California would be the first state in America to ban spanking. Penalties would range from mandatory parenting classes to a misdemeanor with up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Current California law deems child abuse as unlawful, but permits spanking that is "reasonable and age appropriate."

Some professionals claim spanking promotes aggression and violence, while others claim that, if used in a judicious way, spanking can be an effective and appropriate parenting technique.

In a controversy that has lasted for decades, questions arise: When does spanking become "hitting"? Similarly, spanking is often exchanged with the words "beating" or "whipping"—but are these words synonymous?

All agree that child abuse should never be tolerated. Also, it is unacceptable for parents to lose their temper and lash out in anger when disciplining their children. But does this mean *all* spanking should be banned?

Days after California's anti-spanking bill was announced, a toddler and her parents were kicked off an airplane because the child had a tantrum—a scenario witnessed daily in stores across America—and would not sit down for takeoff. After 15 minutes of delay, with the little girl kicking and screaming, the airline company asked the family to leave.

Is spanking necessary to correctly discipline a child? Or would children be better off without it, better able to

Please see **BILL**, page 20

AFRICA

Al-Qaeda Operatives Targeted in Somalia

Within the past several weeks, the United States has conducted multiple air strikes on suspected al-Qaeda targets in Somalia. U.S. officials describe the attacks as part of continuing military operations against an international terrorist network in East Africa.

Two weeks ago, an AC-130 gunship targeted two suspected al-Qaeda agents, one the senior leader in East Africa and the other an operative wanted for his involvement in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Driven out of Somalia's capital and other areas of the country in December 2005, both were believed to have been hiding in the jungles of southern Somalia.

Andrew McGregor, director of Aberfoyle International Security, a Canada-based agency specializing in political and security issues in the Islamic world, stated, "It shows a growing commitment on the part of United States forces to become engaged militarily in Somalia at a time when they are quite busy on other fronts. It also demonstrates what seems to be a firm belief in the U.S. administration that there are important al-Qaeda elements at large in Somalia that would seem to pose some kind of immediate threat to the United States that would call for these extraordinary measures, and this kind of assessment, I'm afraid, is not shared by everyone" (*VOA News*).

Meanwhile, Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh condemned the American air strikes. "These American strikes are counter-productive, I always condemn them because they achieve nothing and because innocent people lose their lives," Mr. Guelleh said in an interview at the African Union summit in Addis Ababa. Djibouti hosts the only permanent U.S. military base in Africa.



However, Mr. Guelleh insisted that "none of the Americans based with us were involved in this operation" (*Middle East Online*).

This was America's first military action in Somalia since the completion of its unsuccessful peacekeeping mission in 1994, most remembered for the infamous "Black Hawk Down" incident, which led U.S. President Bill Clinton to withdraw forces from the country. Ever since, Somalia has been a war-ravaged state and a safe haven for terrorists due to the lack of a stable government.

Ethiopia has been key in somewhat stabilizing Somalia, but it says its mission there is finished and it will begin a phased withdrawal of its troops in the coming days. It is reported that all its troops, estimated to be upwards of 10,000 strong, will be pulled out within several weeks.

The powerful Ethiopian army has helped the Somali government defeat Islamists who have repeatedly threatened to overthrow it.

A Somali Islamist group recently threatened to fight any peacekeeping troops sent to their coun-

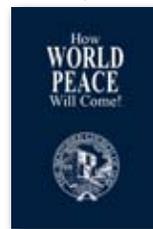
try. Other Somali militants attacked Mogadishu's presidential palace, but were held off.

Because of the potential power vacuum created by Ethiopian forces leaving Somalia, some are saying it is important for the U.S. to continue its military campaigns and to support the transitional government, including pouring millions of dollars into reconstructing the country. If the United States does not invest time and money in Somalia, they say, there is the likelihood that the country could slip back into a chaotic mess. This could easily lead to al-Qaeda establishing strongholds throughout the lawless state, a move the group is reportedly seeking to conduct.

Many fear an Iraqi-style insurgency, and worry that, without the U.S. contributing in some way—whether militarily, financially, or both—there is little hope for Somalia's future.

But does America have the resources to handle another rebuilding project—possibly long-term—similar to Afghanistan or, bigger yet, Iraq? And would the American public support such an action?

Ultimately, peace will be achieved in Somalia—to learn how, read *How WORLD PEACE Will Come*. □

**BILL**

Continued from page 19

live productive, happy lives?

In some ways society has gone from being overly strict to overly permissive. Should there be a balance? How can parents produce happy, healthy children?

To learn hundreds of proven childrearing techniques, based off timeless principles, read *Train Your CHILDREN God's Way*. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

terms, and carry implications almost too numerous and far-reaching to comprehend.

If you are a parent, your task is to recognize what all of this means to *you*, which must translate into ACTION—what you must *do*!

The Greatest Challenge

Take a moment to consider the world around you. Reflect on all the different kinds of influences—with seemingly more every day—to which a child is exposed. Rearing children in today's violent, morally permissive, confusing, "anything goes" world is perhaps the most trying, difficult thing that adults could do.

The situation could be likened to a ship entering what has been called "the perfect storm." The force of the wind and the size of the waves beating on the "parental ships" of today mean that parents are working seemingly against all odds, and without a compass, maps, a working rudder or an engine to power their ship—assuming they even knew where to steer it. However, in reality, the greatest "perfect storm" is that which their children are suffering. If it could be said that parents are experiencing 30-foot waves and gale force winds in the open ocean, at least they are on a ship. By analogy, their children are experiencing the same conditions, but in a small, leaking row boat, without oars or a can with which to bail!

Fathers and mothers today must counteract a host of powerful pulls

coming from Hollywood, Madison Avenue and MTV, all of which glamorize rebellious attitudes and self-centeredness. Then they must contend with a strange, perverse generation of young people who are different from all previous generations, and who have their children surrounded. Youth and teenagers of today have a whole variety of new subcultures, values and thinking—many of which would shock all but the most liberal, open-minded parents!

Consider the following quote from *The Daily Telegraph*, a British newspaper, in an article titled, "Keep out: TV, DVD and computers rule." It plainly reveals the effect of technology on parenting today: "Technology is destroying traditional family life as young adolescents increasingly spend more time in their bedrooms playing computer games, surfing the Internet or watching television, videos and DVDs, a study released today claims. Whereas the living room used to be the hub of the home, now more and more 11- to 14-year-olds prefer to be alone in their technology-filled bedrooms, communicating with friends via mobile phone texting or e-mail." (This article goes on to state that 75 percent of children ages 11 to 14 have a television in their room, 64 percent have a DVD player or VCR, and one-fourth have a computer in their room.)

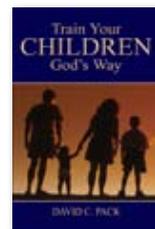
Hopeless Generation

So many children and teenagers today have become hopeless, with no hint, inkling or clue of why they are alive, and whether there is a PURPOSE for human existence. Just observing their faces in a crowd

reveals this much. They can see that world conditions grow ever worse, with the news of each day seemingly worse than the day before, and the problems each day becoming worse and greater in number than the day before.

The result of all this is that the vast majority of children and teenagers today simply tune out the confusion and emptiness of religion, the division and ineffectiveness of government, the evils and troubles plaguing schools and education, the complex economic forces at work in the modern world and the breakdown of the family, which increasingly often includes their own. This leads them to select from—more like back into—a variety of different means of escape: drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, endless parties, and mindless, gratuitous entertainment, among others—to occupy themselves. In turn, this leads to a whole host of problems which are overwhelming society, and parents as well.

Your children will be—and maybe already are—tempted to turn off, give up and drop out if you are not unceasingly vigilant in your responsibility to keep them in the belief that they can HAVE A FUTURE, and that it can be wonderful beyond belief, *if* they are carefully building it step by step under your guidance! □



SUGGESTED READING:

God COMMANDS parents to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). But how can parents do this? God's Word addresses this and many other questions—and the answers are not what you expect!

MINISTER

Continued from page 9

have read. Beware of clever rebuttals. Do not believe cunning arguments meant to twist the clear, unambiguous scriptures covered herein.

Your minister should know the answers to these questions. The prophet Ezekiel makes it clear what God

thinks of those who have knowledge and willingly ignore it: "You dwell in the midst of a *rebellious house*, which have eyes to see, and see not [a choice is made!]; they have ears to hear, and hear not: FOR THEY ARE A REBELLIOUS HOUSE" (Ezek. 12:2).

Will you be the same?

Why have you never been taught these things? How can such amazing truths—so obvious from the pages

of your Bible—remain hidden for so long?

Your eyes have been opened to just seven teachings. You are left to decide whether you will return to deception—or find out why you have been misled for so many years. The right choice means you can begin to learn many more marvelous truths from God's Instruction Manual for mankind—the Holy Bible! □

Mardi Gras

What is the connection?

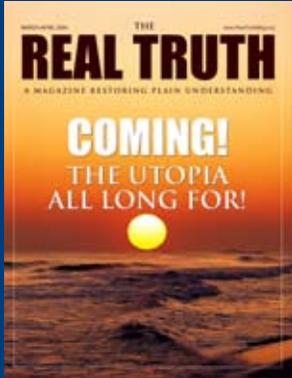
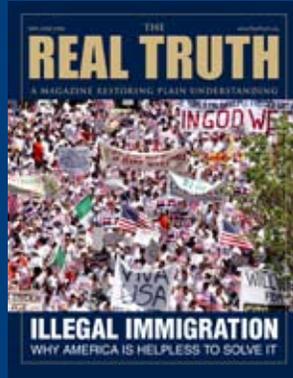
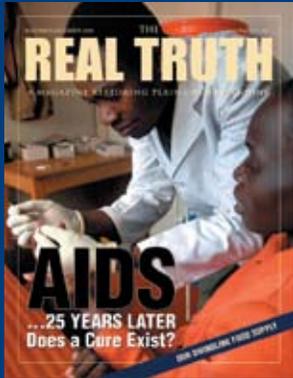
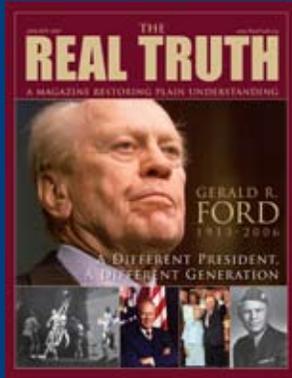
These and other online articles reveal the history behind many of man's holidays, customs and traditions.



Lent



Have you missed out on previous issues?



Read them online at your convenience!